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September 30, 2016

Via Hand Delivery

Hon. Carl Weisbrod
Chair
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: St. John's Center
550 Washington Street (Manhattan Block 596, Lot 1)
ULURP Nos. 160309ZMM, 160310ZSM, 160311 ZSM,
160312ZSM, 160313ZSM, N160314ZAM, N160315ZAM,
N160316ZAM, N160317ZCM

Dear Chair Weisbrod:

On behalf of SJC 33 Owner 2015 LLC (the "Applicant"), we are writing to express the Applicant's commitment to make certain design modifications to the 550 Washington Street project, to address concerns raised by the Commission during its prior review sessions. The design modifications are discussed below. Drawings that illustrate these modifications are included with this letter.

1. Retail

The Applicant understands the Commission's desire to promote active streetscapes and retail variety in the project. To address this concern, the Applicant has agreed that the project will provide a minimum of four retail establishments at the ground-floor level on each of the north and south sides of West Houston Street and three retail establishments at the ground-floor level on Clarkson Street, at such time as the project sites are developed in accordance with the special permits. These ground-floor retail restrictions will be reflected on the final ULURP drawing set for the project. In addition, the Applicant has agreed that the "big-box alternative" studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Study will not be pursued, and is discussing appropriate below-grade retail limitations with Department staff.

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Hon. Carl Weisbrod
September 30, 2016
Page 2

2. West Houston Street Elevated Open Space

The Community Board and Borough President previously raised concerns about the elevated open space on the former rail beds above West Houston Street. The Commission has also raised concerns about this open space, specifically with regard to its impact on the pedestrian experience on the sidewalks below. To address these concerns, the Applicant will agree to remove the former rail beds entirely, and to eliminate the elevated open space from the project. Removing the rail beds is expected to alleviate the concern about insufficient lighting and activation along West Houston Street, and accordingly, the design requirements related to lighting will no longer be necessary when the rail beds are removed. While the open space on the rail beds will be removed, additional open areas will be provided within the project at grade level, including within the through-block passageway, at such time as the Center Site is developed in accordance with the special permits. Providing open space at grade level was one of the recommendations of the Community Board and Borough President. The Applicant has previously agreed to make design modifications to the through-block passageway – including by introducing seating and plantings – that will make the area attractive for passive recreation, and the Applicant will work with Department staff to identify additional open space that can be provided at grade.

3. Recreation Space

As partial mitigation for the active open space impact identified in the DEIS, the Applicant is prepared to provide an indoor recreation space of approximately 10,000 gross square feet within the project. This space will be located on the Center Site, either at-grade or below-grade, and will be delivered if and when the Center Site buildings are constructed. The space will include the following elements:

- The space will be fitted out for recreation uses, and will be suitable for activities such as various ball sports, martial arts, or fitness classes. It will also include support space, including bathrooms and storage.
- The space will be shared between the public and the residents of the building. The space will be available to the public for 50% of its operating hours.
- The Applicant will engage a third-party community partner to handle the management, scheduling, and programming of the space. This organization will advertise the space and develop a program of community use, and will staff and manage the space during the hours of community use.
- The Applicant will have the ability to charge fees for use of the space to cover overhead and maintenance, and will apply standard contractual

Hon. Carl Weisbrod
September 30, 2016
Page 3

arrangements for users, related to security, insurance, liability, and responsibility for cleaning the space.

Plans showing illustrative locations of the space – both a ground-floor and a cellar-level alternative – are attached to this letter. The final location of the space is still under review.

4. Through-Block Driveway Improvements

The design of the through-block driveway between the Center and South Sites will be modified to be made more pedestrian-friendly, at such time as the project sites are developed in accordance with the special permits. The modifications include the following:

- The separated vehicle drop-off area and island in front of the South Site commercial building will be eliminated, and instead a lay-by lane for vehicle drop-offs will be provided in front of the South Site building. This modification will also increase the sidewalk area provided in front of the South Site building.
- The pedestrian area in front of the South Site building will include no fewer than eight moveable tables and 32 moveable chairs.
- Eight backless benches will be located on each of the north and south sides of the driveway.
- Trees and plantings will be provided, separating the roadbed from the sidewalk.
- The roadbed and sidewalk will have distinct, but similar, paving patterns to create visual separation, and with traffic-calming pavers in the roadbed.
- A minimum of 50% of the ground-floor building façades facing the through-block driveway will be occupied by transparent glazing materials.
- The driveway will be open to the public for pedestrian passage from dawn to dusk.

A revised plan for the through-block driveway is included with this letter.

Hon. Carl Weisbrod
September 30, 2016
Page 4

5. West Houston Street Improvements

To make the West Houston Street streetscape pedestrian-friendly, the Applicant has agreed to certain design guidelines for the project once it is developed in accordance with the special permits, as stated below.

- Excluding residential lobbies, the entire West Houston Street frontage will be occupied by retail uses at the ground-floor level.
- All retail uses along West Houston Street will have a minimum depth of 30 feet.
- Building lobbies on West Houston Street will be limited to no more than 25 feet in width per lobby.
- As noted above, the north and south frontages of West Houston Street will contain no fewer than four retail establishments at the ground-floor level.
- Street wall transparency on the ground floor along West Houston Street will be increased from 50%, which is already required on all other facades of the buildings, to a minimum of 70% at the ground floor, on both the north and south sides of the street.
- Non-transparent portions of the façade will be limited to contiguous lengths of no more than 10 feet between each area of transparency.
- Tenant storefront guidelines will require a minimum amount of glazing and interior lighting. These guidelines will also include a prohibition from obscuring more than 25% of the total storefront transparency between the window and a depth of approximately two feet from the window, and minimum interior lighting levels.

6. Project Design Requirements

The Applicant has agreed to specific design guidelines for the proposed buildings, prepared by CookFox Architects, once the buildings are developed in accordance with the special permits. The design guidelines include the following:

- the use of masonry in the facades, with certain limitations on the use of metal and glass;
- window type guidelines, with no reflective glass;
- window and storefront recess requirements, to create a dynamic façade; and

Hon. Carl Weisbrod
September 30, 2016
Page 5

- sustainability requirements, including that at least 30% of all horizontal surfaces will be planted.

These design guidelines will be added to the design guidelines already included on the drawings, which include:

- maximum building height, tower dimensions, and maximum and minimum street wall heights;
- maximum street wall depth;
- minimum street wall transparency;
- a guideline that bulkheads be finished in the same materials as the tops of the buildings below; and
- minimum sidewalk widths.

* * * *

As described above, the Applicant has made material and significant adjustments to the project, which will be provided at such time as the sites are developed in accordance with the special permits. Each of the project's elements, as noted in our prior letters, are critical to the project's success and economic viability. Further material changes to the project may jeopardize its feasibility and, ultimately, its ability to provide the significant public benefits it offers: notably, a \$100 million cash infusion to the Hudson River Park to save Pier 40 (an amount that exceeds the appraised value of the development rights to be transferred) and up to 328,700 square feet of permanently affordable housing. We thank the Commission for a productive dialogue on this important project.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Michael T. Sillerman

Enclosures

KRAMER LEVIN NAFTALIS & FRANKEL LLP

Hon. Carl Weisbrod
September 30, 2016
Page 6

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson
Hon. Gale Brewer
Tobi Bergman, Manhattan Community Board 2